Quality Assurance in Accredited Training for Volunteers

Training provides volunteers with a structured opportunity to learn. Accreditation adds value to this learning by formally recognising what the learner knows or can do as a result of the training. The learner’s knowledge and/or ability needs to be tested against an agreed benchmark or standard known as assessment and is carried out by an assessor. Once the standards have been met, formal recognition is given by an awarding body that may provide the learner with a certificate to prove their achievement.

Quality assurance is important in any training programme; however it is of particular importance to an accredited training programme. It provides reassurance to learners that the standards set, and against which they are being assessed, are being adhered to. It also provides reassurance to the awarding body that the standards are being applied consistently.

The aims of this paper are as follows:

- To introduce the principles for quality assurance
- To describe a model of quality assurance
- To explain a method of record keeping in assessment

Basic principles of quality assurance

The principles of quality assurance exist to ensure that the assessment system is consistent, reliable and fair.

Consistency

It is important to be able to show that assessment judgements are consistent for different candidates, different assessors and over time.

To ensure consistent assessment decisions, the assessor must know what they are looking for when carrying out assessment of learner’s evidence. It is a good idea to have an example answer for every question asked. The example answer must correspond directly to the standards. Learners do not need to have the same answer as the example, but it gives the assessor guidance for their decision.

All decisions must ultimately be judged against the standards, so refer to both during assessment. Having such a system in place helps ensure consistent decision making by one or more assessors. Remember that example answers are for assessors’ eyes only!

Reliability

The methods of assessment being used must be capable of producing the right amount of the
right sort of evidence from learners. This means being able to link all the evidence to relevant standards of assessment, and ensuring that the assessment activities enable learners to accumulate and present the evidence required. Therefore, careful consideration of the most appropriate assessment method is important during planning. For example, one larger assessment activity may provide evidence for a number of standards rather than carrying out smaller separate assessments for each standard. This could prevent evidence being taken out of context or avoids repetition of work.

Fairness

One vital aspect of a fair assessment system is that it is open to question and challenge, therefore an appeals procedure should be in place. For example, if a learner is unhappy with an assessment decision that has been made, they have the right to challenge it, or 'appeal' it. All learners must be made aware of this procedure and how it can be instigated if necessary. An appeals procedure should include the following:

- who to contact in the first instance regarding an appeal, e.g. the assessor
- who to contact if agreement cannot be reached by completing the above
- a timescale for each stage of the procedure

Appeals should be made or confirmed in writing, and minutes should be made of any meetings held to discuss the appeal. This ensures that an accurate record of decisions made is available to all involved in the process. Confidentiality should be observed in all cases. The awarding body representative should be notified of any cases for appeal so that the learning resulting from the experience can be applied to future delivery of the training programme.
A model of quality assurance

The following example illustrates a quality assurance model which could be implemented in any organisation delivering an accredited programme.

External Quality

This is carried out by a person who is external to the organisation and appointed by the awarding body. They are responsible for reporting back to the awarding body any issues of good or bad practice, and making recommendations for improvements to the training programme. They review and verify the assessment process and the organisation’s internal quality assurance process to ensure the good practice principles of assessment are adhered to. This person is external to the organisation delivering the training.

Internal Quality

This is carried out by someone who is responsible for ensuring that the assessor(s) in an organisation makes consistent, reliable and fair assessment decisions. They do not re-assess the learner’s work, but check the accuracy and consistency of the assessor’s judgement. This requires clear, accurate and up to date record keeping systems as well as clear guidance on what is being assessed and how it is being assessed. This can be done by sampling a number of assessed pieces of work, and should aim to cover all of the standards, plus any queries the assessor may have. Internal quality assurance can be carried out by more than one person who can be internal or external to the organisation delivering the training programme.

Tutor/Assessor

The tutor is usually responsible for ensuring the learner can complete the assessment exercise. The assessor decides if the learner has met the standard required. In many cases the tutor might also be the assessor, or the assessor could be a colleague. The number of tutors and assessors involved can depend on the size and expertise within an organisation, the number of learners and the size of the training programme.
Record keeping and assessment

When learners complete and submit work it is reviewed by an assessor to ensure the learner meets the standard required for accreditation. Clear and accurate record keeping by the programme assessor is essential to the success – or otherwise – of an accredited training programme. Good record keeping helps ensure consistency, reliability and fairness during assessment. It also makes the process of validation easier. Consideration of how assessment will be carried out and records kept, should take place during the planning stage of programme development. Methods of record keeping should be as simple and succinct as possible.

Learners’ records

An assessor’s role is a great deal easier if learners present their evidence in a consistent way, e.g. this may involve learners completing an answer sheet or a template designed by the assessor. Where learners are accumulating evidence, e.g. towards accreditation or to record achievements, a portfolio provides one way of presenting evidence. This does not have to be a huge collection of paper; it can simply be a folder or document wallet which contains the learner’s assessment information. Basically it should include three parts:

1. Background information to put the evidence in context (learners contact details at the very least).
2. The learner’s evidence, e.g. answers to assessment questions. Each piece of evidence should be referenced, e.g. Exercise Sheet A, Flowchart 1 etc.
3. An index which cross-references the evidence to the standards.

Any information held in a portfolio should be secured by staples, ring binder or treasury tags to ensure that important pieces of assessment information do not get mislaid. Learners should ensure that their name is clearly marked on all work submitted.

Assessors’ records

Assessors should use a standard format or template for assessment feedback as a way to record their assessment decisions and give feedback to learners. (Example attached). All records of assessment decisions made and feedback given should be saved.

A tried and tested method for recording a learners’ assessment progress is to use a grid which tracks assessment for each learner against the standards and the evidence submitted. This personal assessment record enables accurate and detailed tracking of how and when each standard has been achieved by each learner. It also refers to the piece of evidence which has been assessed. All assessment decisions should be signed and dated by the assessor to ensure validity. (Example attached).

It is also useful to have a summative assessment record for the group of learners which records participants’ names, their progress through the standards and the date they completed.

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all assessment successfully. A summative assessment record is a useful tool for recording which learners are being recommended for certification. (Example attached).
Summary of key points

♦ Assessment involves measuring learners’ achievements against standards. Accreditation goes one step further by giving formal recognition when all the standards are met.

♦ The principles of quality assurance exist to ensure that your assessment system is consistent, reliable and fair.

♦ Assessment judgements must be consistent for different candidates, different assessors and over time.

♦ The methods of assessment being used must be capable of producing the right amount of the right sort of evidence from learners.

♦ A fair assessment system will include an appeals procedure which is open and accessible to all learners.

♦ It is good practice to implement a system of validation which checks the accuracy and verifies the consistency of the assessor’s judgement.

♦ The key to good record keeping is to keep it succinct, as simple as possible, up to date, and for the assessor to sign and date all pieces of assessed work.

Useful contacts and further information

More information on how to manage accredited training is available in the information paper: Developing an Accredited Training Programme for Volunteers. This is available to download from the Volunteer Now website at www.volunteernow.co.uk or by contact the training team on 028 9023 2020.

For more information on involving volunteers visit Volunteer Now’s website at www.volunteernow.co.uk
### Glossary of terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>A process of <strong>testing</strong> a learner’s knowledge, ability and/or understanding against an agreed standard. This process is carried out by a person known as an assessor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td><strong>Formal recognition</strong> of a learner’s achievement when all standards have been accomplished. Recognition leads to the award of a certificate by an awarding body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality assurance</td>
<td>A process which ensures that assessment of all learners is <strong>consistent</strong>, <strong>fair</strong> and <strong>reliable</strong>. This process can involve a number of different people, internal and external to the organisation. This process may also be known as moderation or verification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard(s) of assessment</td>
<td>The <strong>benchmark(s)</strong> against which the assessor makes a judgement about whether or not a learner has demonstrated a particular level of knowledge, ability or understanding. Standards establish what the learner has to be able to do after completing a process of learning. Learners must achieve the standards in order to get accreditation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awarding body</td>
<td>An organisation which <strong>approves the standards</strong> which the learner is aiming to achieve. Learners must be registered with the awarding body. The awarding body will provide the <strong>certificate</strong> once all standards are accomplished. Examples of awarding bodies include NI Open College Network, City and Guilds, OCR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners evidence</td>
<td><strong>Information</strong> provided by the learner for the purpose of <strong>assessment</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Template</td>
<td>A consistent way of presenting or recording information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal assessment record</td>
<td>A method of recording an <strong>individual learner’s achievements</strong> as they complete assessment during a training course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative assessment record</td>
<td>A method of recording and <strong>summarising a group of learners’ progress</strong> as assessment is completed.</td>
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Example Assessment Feedback Sheet

Course Title: Attracting and Selecting Volunteers

Candidate Name: C Taylor

Assessment Exercise Reference: Exercise Sheet A

Feedback:

Q1, Q2, Q3 – All answered very well – well done!

Q4 – You have only given 2 examples of barriers to volunteers. One more is required.

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<th>Date action completed:</th>
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<td>Give one more example of a barrier to volunteers</td>
<td>20 October 2009</td>
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Assessor Signature: _____________________________ Date: _______________
Example Personal Assessment Record

Candidate Name: C Taylor
Candidate Contact Details: c.taylor@yahoo.com
Course Title: Attracting and Selecting Volunteers
Course start Date: 3 September 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard /Criteria</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
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<th>Date achieved</th>
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<td>1.2</td>
<td>Flowchart 1</td>
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<td>2.2</td>
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<td></td>
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Additional support required:

Any other comments:

Excellent candidate with a good understanding of how to apply the theories discussed in training to practice in the organisation.

Recommend this candidate for accreditation: Yes [ ] No [x]

Assessor Signature: DT Date: 12 November 2009
**Example Summative Record**

**Course Title:** Attracting and Selecting Volunteers  
**Course start Date:** 3 September 2009

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Standards/Criteria</th>
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<th>Recommend for award of certificate</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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**Assessor signature:** DT  
**Date:** 12 November 2009

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